

**The University of Auckland
School of Humanities
PHILOSOPHY**

PHIL 218 and PHIL 338: PROBLEMS IN EPISTEMOLOGY

Semester 1 2014, City Campus

Staff:

- **Course Supervisor and Lecturer:** Professor John Bishop, Room 325 Arts 2, Ext. 87611.
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- **Tutor:** TBA

Lecture Information:

The lecture for this course will be on Thursdays 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Tutorial Information:

Tutorials begin in the second week of Semester, starting Monday, 10 March 2014.

Currently, there are two tutorials for this course.

Tutorial times:

- Mondays, 3:00 – 4:00p.m
- Mondays, 4:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Course description:

This is a course on epistemology, or the ‘theory of knowledge’. We shall investigate a variety of issues, including the concepts of knowledge, truth and justification, the ‘Gettier problem’, theories of epistemic justification, and the problem of skepticism. Our aim is to get a good sense of the range of topics discussed in contemporary epistemology, making sure that we grasp what those problems are, how they are thought to arise, the kinds of solutions that have been proposed, and the debates arising from these proposals. As always in Philosophy, in developing our own critical understanding, we will be alert to ways in which we might make our own contributions to the continuing debates.

To achieve this aim, we will use the framework of topics set out in Noah Lemos, *An Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge*, Cambridge University Press, 2007 (the textbook for the course). Lectures will follow the themes of the Chapters of this book, and suggestions will be made for further readings. Students are encouraged to undertake their own search for literature on the topics covered in Lemos - especially on topics chosen for the Assignment or in preparation for the Final Examination. We will complete the course by discussing a classic text in epistemology, Ludwig Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*. [An electronic version may be accessed through the Library:

The Collected Works of Ludwig Wittgenstein [electronic resource] / edited by G.E.M. Anscombe, G.H. von Wright, Rush Rhees, Heikki Nyman.
Charlottesville, VA : InteLex Corporation, 1998. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958-1998.

Basic Course Programme:

The plan is for ten lectures on the topics of the Chapters in Lemos. In each case, the basic required reading is the relevant Chapter. The format will be a presentation of the topic, followed by inter-active discussion.

Lecture 1 (6 March): *An Introduction to Epistemology and the Concepts of Knowledge, Truth & Justification*

Lecture 2 (13 March): *The Traditional Analysis of Knowledge and the Gettier Problem*

Lecture 3 (20 March): *Foundationalism*

Lecture 4 (27 March): *The Coherence Theory of Justification*

Lecture 5 (3 April): *Reliabilism and Virtue Epistemology*

Lecture 6 (10 April): *Internalism, Externalism and Epistemic Circularity*

Mid-Semester Break

Lecture 7 (1 May): *Skepticism*

Lecture 8 (8 May): *The Problem of the Criterion*

Lecture 9 (15 May): *The A Priori*

Lecture 10 (22 May): *Naturalized Epistemology*

Lecture 11 (29 May): *Wittgenstein's 'On Certainty'*

Lecture 12 (5 June): *Wittgenstein's 'On Certainty'*

Assessment: Assignment and Final Examination:

PHIL 218: Your assessment will be determined as follows:

If you qualify for plussage, your overall mark will be whichever is the HIGHER of (a) your final 3-hour examination mark or (b) 60% of your final examination mark plus 40% of your coursework mark. The coursework mark is the mark achieved on one 2,000 word essay. ***To qualify for plussage you must complete the essay to a satisfactory standard.*** If you do not qualify for plussage, your final result will be your final examination mark out of 100, less 10 marks.

PHIL 338: Your assessment will be determined as follows:

Your overall mark consists of a final 3-hour examination worth 50% and one 3,000 word essay worth 50%.

Assignment

Write an essay of not more than 2,000 words (for PHIL 218), or not more than 3,000 words (for PHIL 338), on one of the following topics. **The due date is Friday, 16th May at 3:00p.m.**

Essay Topics:

- 1) What does the Gettier problem show? How should we respond to it?
- 2) Compare the relative merits of foundationalism and coherentism as accounts of justification. Is either successful?
- 3) Briefly set out and critically evaluate a version of reliabilism as an account of justification.
- 4) What is at issue between externalists and internalists about justification? Which side is correct, or has the more plausible position?
- 5) Explain how the problem of skepticism arises in epistemology by focusing on what you consider to be the most powerful argument in its favour. Can the force of this argument be rationally resisted?

Doing coursework assists your learning and your development of philosophical skills. We expect that all your submitted work will conform to the requirements of academic integrity: you should properly reference all your sources, acknowledge the work of others, and avoid plagiarism. Students are advised to make sure they understand what academic integrity requires by taking the course available through the Library website:

<https://www.academicintegrity.auckland.ac.nz/>

It is also important that you submit coursework in case you are ill or otherwise unable to sit the examination. If you make an application for an aegrotat or compassionate consideration we cannot make any recommendation unless there is good evidence, provided by coursework results, of your achievements in the course concerned.

Final examination

The final examination will be a 3-hour examination, in which you will be asked to answer THREE unseen essay questions, chosen from a list of questions covering all the topics of the course. You should **not** write answer an examination question on your coursework topic unless you avoid substantially repeating the content of your essay.

Note:

If you have any problems or complaints concerning your work in a particular course, you should take them in the first instance to the relevant lecturer or tutor. If the matter is not satisfactorily resolved in this way, then you should refer it to the Course director of the course concerned. If your problem is still not resolved, then you should refer it to the Head of Philosophy.